

A Return to Tawheed

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Realities of Faith

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The kalimah (word) of *tawheed*, '*La ilaha ill-Allah*' came to correct belief - not only that of the ancient polytheists, but of all men up until the Day of Judgement. It testifies that there is no divinity except Allah none other than Him and none along with Him. None is similar to Him, none creates and sustains except Him, and none has the right to govern creation but Him. The concept of *tawheed* necessarily overflows into all aspects of belief and worship into all aspects of life. Whether he recognizes it or not, man is totally indebted to his Creator for his continuing existence hour by hour, not to mention such blessings as his many possessions and abilities. Knowing that Allah alone is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller, the source of all benefit and harm in whose hands is the Judgement and the final destination of men *requires* through common sense and reason that He alone be worshipped.

Although the concept of worship (*ibadah*) has been gradually reduced in common usage to mean little more than the performance of certain religious rites and rituals, the original and true definition is comprehensive. It encompasses all actions and intentions motivated by a recognition of greatness - that combination of love and fear, producing efforts to please the worshipped one and to avoid his displeasure. An object of worship continually occupies the mind of the worshipper and consequently governs his behavior, both consciously and unconsciously. When applying the correct definition, it becomes clear that despite lip-service to "*La ilaha ill-Allah*," one's object of worship could well be something other than Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*).

"Have you seen the one who takes as his god ins own desire, and [so] Allah has left him astray because of knowledge?" [45:23 – Scholars have said that the phrase "'ala `ilm" (because of knowledge) refers to Allah's knowledge of that servant and his preference for his own desires, or as well, to that servant's knowledge of the truth although he rejects it]

Those pursuers of falsehood in the form of political ideologies and national leaders, foreign customs, wealth, fashion or various worldly enjoyments might assume that by bowing to Allah in prayer, they worship Him alone. But Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) firmly corrected this misconception.

Once, 'Adiyy bin Hatim entered while the Prophet was reciting a verse from the Qur'an:

"They took their scholars and monks as lords other than Allah and [also] the Messiah, Son of Mary. And they were not ordered except to worship one God..." [9:31]

'Adiyy (who had been a Christian), said, "O Messenger of Allah, they did not worship them." The Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) replied, "Did they not tell them that the prohibited was lawful and that the lawful was prohibited and they followed them in that?" When 'Adiyy admitted, "Yes," the Prophet stated, "That was their worship of them." [Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi]

Thus worship was defined as obedience - a fact that becomes evident from even a superficial study of the Qur'an in which Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) orders repeatedly:

"Obey Allah and the Messenger." [3:32, 3:132, 4:59, 8:1, 8:64, 24:54, 47:33, 58:13 and 64:12. Many other verses, although worded differently, carry the same meaning.]

"Legislation is only for Allah. He has commanded that you not worship any but Him. That is the right religion, but most of the people do not know." [12:40]

Two types of shirk were common both before and after the prophethood of Muhammad (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam). The first of these is the direction of acts of worship (especially supplication) to others besides Allah while still claiming belief in Him. The Qur'an orders:

"And do not invoke besides Allah another god. There is no god but Him." [12:40]

The other type of shirk is the willful adherence to laws and rulings other than His.

"Do you not consider those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to taghoot [i.e. false objects of worship or those transgressors who usurp the divine right of government] while they were commanded to reject it." [4:60]

The loss of tawheed is sadly evident today in the acceptance of foreign philosophies and lifestyles, political oppression, innovations in religion, and countless forms of disobedience. Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) warns:

"Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. And do not follow any patrons other than Him." [7:3]

"And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will lead you away from the path of Allah." [6:116]

"And certainly do many lead [others] astray through their own desires without knowledge." [6:119]

"And do not obey one whose heart We have made unaware of Our remembrance and who follows his desires and whose affair is excess [i.e. exceeding the limits of Allah]." [18:28]

Reform will be accomplished only when the majority of Muslims has returned to the true worship of Allah and will no longer tolerate shirk. The greater jihad against tyranny and oppression everywhere on earth will neither be accepted by Allah nor aided by Him until the participants are truly dedicated to His cause and free of all other motivations. Jihad against the self and refinement of the soul are the first steps towards jihad for Islam.

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves..." [13:11]

The solution begins with the individual...in the soul.